

**CLARK COUNTY
CLEAN WATER COMMISSION
Regular Meeting**

Wednesday, July 19, 2000
6:00 – 8:30 PM

Clark County Public Works Department
Conference Room
4700 NE 78th Street
Vancouver, Washington

Approved as Amended 8/16/00

Call to Order

Roll Call

Commission Members Present

Robert Agard, Willie Bourlet, Cal Ek, Dana Kemper, Susan Rasmussen, Don Steinke, Art Stubbs, and Peter Tuck

Commission Members Absent

Mary Martin

Guest

Marlia Jenkins, Community Development

County Staff

Brian Carlson, Kelli Frost, and Earl Rowell

Public

Tom Armstrong, Ed Brann, Pete Brennou, Randy Campbell, Carl Hill, Della Kemp Helarick, Duane Koskin, Bill Kravas, Dave Querio, Sandy Reimer, Gary Skordahl, and Billee Sunderland

Introduction

Commissioner Agard, Chair, introduced members of the Clean Water Commission and asked that staff and public introduce themselves.

Agenda and Material Review

Mr. Rowell reviewed the material for tonight's meeting. Included are:

- An agenda
- Notes from the June 21st meeting
- Materials sent to the Superintendent of Hockinson School District as well as the Ridgefield School district, a memorandum from the Prosecuting Attorney's Office regarding the liability for interest expense on stormwater fees.
- Articles from various newspapers covering the Clean Water bill
- A copy of the Reapplication and Annual Report for Municipal Stormwater and Waste Discharge Permit No. WA-004211-1.

Commissioner Agard: We also had some communications from the public, is this true?

Mr. Rowell: Mr. Commissioner we have had quite a bit of communication from the public over the last few weeks. Since the bills have gone out Environmental Services has logged over 900 calls, e-mails, letters, walk-ins to the office as well as faxes. The Treasurer's office has gotten over 1,000 phone calls. Operations and development also received calls. The audience tonight is testimony to that as well.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Stubbs requested the minutes to be approved as written.
Commissioner Ek seconded the request.
The minutes were approved as written.

Old Business

Communication with the media/public

Mr. Rowell informed the Commissioners that there have been several articles in The Columbian, The Oregonian, and The Reflector, regarding the Clean Water Fee. Copies of these articles are available to the public. Mr. Rowell also pointed out that stormwater management and funding of such efforts is not just a Clark County issue, but a National issue. This issue reaches all the way from a local to a federal level.

Neighborhood Stormwater Pilot Project

Mr. Rowell commented that to do this project right it would involve a more detailed analysis, which would take more time than originally discussed. There are also some technical issues associated with the specific watershed originally chosen for this project.

Mr. Rowell pointed out that one of the most important things that was discussed at the last meeting was analogous to one of the Wellhead Grants we received. In that grant we released, flyers, newsletters, and other pieces of information about water quality and water resources protection in specific locations. As part of that grant we are going to go back to see how well that information has been understood and implemented within that particular area. This approach could be used on a county-wide basis.

Commissioner Bourlet stressed the importance of showing the public a study in order to educate them as to what ~~the~~ County is doing. We need to take samples and complete testing in whatever area the engineers think is appropriate.

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Mr. Rowell: There was a concern about the geographical location, and the timing of the project. I'll go back to the technical folks and talk to them about it in more detail. I will then bring back the information to the Commissioners on or before the next meeting so you will have some feedback for the next meeting.

Commissioner Ek: I think it's important that we all remember that this geographical area has to be manageable in size, we cannot take a watershed like Salmon Creek where there are 2000 families upriver from the Hockinson area. We want a geographic area that is manageable and recordable in order for it to be a legitimate pilot project.

Commissioner Kemper: Last year we helped the County with a \$280,000 grant for water quality, and as of last week, nothing has been done. Luckily, with the help of Betty Sue they have looked into getting something implemented and not just sticking the money away in the general fund. Hopefully we'll have some feedback on what can be done with that next meeting.

Commissioner Rasmussen mentioned that maybe we could coordinate with WSU on a pilot project together.

Commissioner Tuck: WSU has offered to do some testing as part of their program on clean water based on what information Clark County would like. I was talking with Ed McMillan of County Development Review and he was hoping that we could talk with WSU and have them help out with some of these projects and maybe come up with a pilot program of a small area and get the testing done.

Comments from the public: What is its (pilot project) goal?

Commissioner Stubbs: A year from now we are supposed to have some sort of program in place that will, in fact, produce clean water from the runoff. On a countywide basis there is no way to measure whether we are going to be effective or not. It was suggested that we take and concentrate on the Green Meadows neighborhood. We could do an educational project informing people about the quality of runoff coming from that neighborhood specifically. By operating the program over a period of six to eight months we should be able to accumulate some useable data. For example, we should be able to tell whether sweeping the streets is doing any good, whether people are buying the same amount of pesticides and insecticides, whether this whole program is just a farce and nothing is going to be accomplished. This will also give us something we can take back to the Federal Government if the program is not working.

Partnership with School Districts

Mr. Rowell: We have had the opportunity to speak with the various school districts over the last few weeks. Those that have said yes to the partnership as part of the agreement to reduce their fee and do a variety of water quality works are Washington State University, Vancouver School District, and Green Mountain School District. Battle Ground School District, Camas School District and Hockinson School District have received another application to encourage them to be part of this agreement. Evergreen School District and LaCenter School Districts have said no to the partnership agreement. We have not heard from Ridgefield School District and Washougal School Districts.

Commissioner Bourlet: I want to know what it is that we are asking the school districts to do that some of them are saying no. It is important that we educate the young people in what we are trying to do, so I would like to know why they are saying no.

Commissioner Stubbs: They are saying no, because their plate is full.

Commissioner Agard: For example in LaCenter School district, because most of their schools are within the city limits, their Clean Water Fee was minimal, it was more effective for them to pay the bill than to participate in this program. Battle Ground School District is, on the other hand, applying for the partnership.

Mr. Rowell: In many instances we are not asking the School Districts to do a whole lot extra. In fact, in some cases all we are asking is to provide the opportunity for County staff to come in and do a presentation. We have asked them to help us determine what it is they are actually doing by filling out a survey that was part of the packet of material they have received.

Commissioner Rasmussen: I talked to the Evergreen School District also, and they reported back to me that this would have to be funneled into their Science curriculum and that "their plate is full".

Commissioner Agard: I think Evergreen School District is the only one with a large amount of funds. If we receive a second refusal from them, we should make a personal visit to the Superintendent and see if we can get some answers on why this wouldn't work.

Street Sweeping

Mr. Bourlet asked Mr. Rowell for some information regarding street sweeping. Does street sweeping in fact help clean the water? Mr. Rowell indicated to Mr. Bourlet that he would gather the information from staff, who are researching other districts across the nation to determine what is appropriate.

Public Input

Overview

Commissioner Agard gave a brief overview, to the public, of the history and development of the Clean Water Commission and Fee before opening the floor to questions.

Mr. Rowell – There are five elements to the Clean Water Program:

1. Enforcement and Regulation
2. Maintenance and Operation
3. Monitoring and Evaluation
4. Education and Outreach
5. Start of a Capital Program

Public Input - Questions and Answers

Question from the public: For a property owner to reduce his cost, will there be a program to help him and what are we looking at cost wise?

Commissioner Agard: One of the charges of this commission is to promote incentive programs to improve storm water, and to reward good “watership”.

Question from the public: How many additional employees is the county going to hire to maintain some of this stuff

Commissioner Agard: ~~At this time there are~~ 5 additional employees hired

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Commissioner Kemper: On page of 28 of the Clark County Annual Report it gives detailed information on when these employees will be hired.

Question from the public: How come these bills went only to the rural area?

Commissioner Agard: Incorporated areas are not ~~included under the NPDES ruling.~~ They have their own stormwater fees.

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Question from the public: Who is going to be taking care of the drainage facility?

Commissioner Agard: The county staff will be maintaining these facilities.

Question from the public: Are there any provisions for seniors on a fixed income?

Commissioner Agard: Yes, they can apply for a hardship clause.

Mr. Rowell: The method that is used is, someone who has an assessed value of property, whatever percentage they are receiving on their property tax is the percentage they will receive on this fee as well.

Question from the public: Will the people who live farther away from the city pay a reduced fee from those who live closer to the city, who are the polluters?

Commissioner Agard: There are many aspects to the formula used to decide the fee to make it fair for everyone.

Question from the public: There is no science connected to any of these reports? Where is the science?

Commissioner Agard: That is one of the reasons that this commission would like to get some testing done and get a base line set up so we can start doing some scientific evaluation on whether we are actually doing anything good with our money.

Question from the public: What do you mean by clean water?

Commissioner Agard: Clean water is such that you can swim in it, fish in it, and creatures can live in it. Everyone is able to use it.

Question from the public: The \$10,000 that is listed as improvements to the property, where does that figure come from?

Commissioner Agard: The County Assessor's office decides that.

New Business

Achievements

Mr. Rowell spoke about the following achievements:

1. The annual report is complete and signed by the County Administrator and submitted to the Washington Department of Ecology as required.
2. A Portland Metropolitan group that looks at public outreach and education has recognized the Clean Water task force from last year. That group has given the task force and staff a preferred excellence award for public process.
3. Internally, we have been able to obtain, notify and record the 900 + calls that we have received in Environmental Services. It is available to the public.

Mr. Rowell described the appeal process. For any individual who would like to appeal their fees, staff are sending out a cover letter and an appeal form. This form asks for their name, address, account number, what their land use is of that particular parcel, and a justification of why they are appealing the fee. That information is being sent to the Director of Public Works for review and he will make a determination on whether any adjustments should be made. Any individual may appeal the directors' findings to the Hearings Examiner for further deliberation.

Commissioner Bourlet: Is it possible to put our e-mail address and our phone numbers on the County Web site? Do you plan on bringing some of those comments you have been receiving to the Commission?

Mr. Rowell: We will summarize the information we have been getting and present it to the Commission.

Commissioner Agard: How does the board feel about having their e-mail and phone number on the County Web site? With Mary Martin absent, we should check with all Commissioner members before making a decision.

Budget/Incentives

Commissioner Ek: There were some concerns about what was happening relative to the amount of billing that was done, it did not match the projections, it looks like we have a significant shortfall to address.

Mr. Rowell commented that by the next meeting we should have some more information that would allow us to discuss this issue in more detail.

It was decided to table the issue of incentives until the next meeting.

Ongoing Projects/Information

Commissioner Steinke – We have Best Management Practices for the homeowner from last meeting and I would like a sub-committee to be formed to revise it or amend it, and get it out to the people as quickly as possible.

Commissioner Agard – I will put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

Next Steps

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Clean Water Commission is August 16, 2000 at 6:00 p.m. at the Clark County Public Works Department Conference Center.

Adjourn

Commissioner Agard adjourned the meeting at 9:00pm.

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Respectfully submitted by Kelli Frost